

10 Tips for Military Families by Military Families

- **Communicate:** Continue to stay in contact with your loved one. If it's your spouse who is deployed, share important information about your kids' struggles and accomplishments. Parenting doesn't stop just because of deployment. Be proud of each other's service and communicate it. Phone calls, cards, letters, setting up a web cam and emails all keep the lines of communication open, which can help put your worries at ease and keep your bond strong.
- **Create a support system:** Make at least one friend who you can count on while your loved one is deployed. Having a community of support for the day-to-day stresses enhances your self-esteem. It is important to have friends and family who will be there to support you and listen to you when times are tough.
- **Volunteer:** Volunteering isn't just good for the community—it is good for you too! Ideas like coaching your kids' sports teams are great ways to get involved. You'll be able to spend time with your kids and it will help you get to know your community better. Staying busy can help deployments go by faster.
- **Stick together:** You are a family first. Deployments are hard so it is important to stick together as a family, because your family is more important than anything. Be proud of your family. Take care of each other. Listen, not just hear.
- **Bloom:** Make the best of where you are stationed and make it work. Being negative about your location will affect every aspect of your life so keep an open mind. Make a conscious decision to find something new, explore a new way of life, and do something good for yourself.
- **Share:** Pass on the names of your good hairdresser, babysitter, mechanic and every other helpful contact. Families start from scratch each time they move and having families who are willing to share information makes an extraordinary difference. The next time you move, you'll need the same information so pay that forward.
- **Remain yourself:** Keep doing things you love to do, whether it's staying home and taking care of your children or working outside the home. Keep your true self nurtured or you will end up resenting your life of service.
- **A Healthy Sense of Humor:** Military life can be challenging—staying positive and laughter will take you a long way.
- **Be Willing to Compromise:** Military life will change your plans, possibly many times. Roles and expectations should be communicated and supporting each other can make all the difference. Being flexible and sharing new responsibilities can help a family adjust to changes and make transitions smoother.
- **Don't be Afraid to Ask for Help:** Find out what services and resources are available for you and your family. Don't hesitate to seek out counseling services and connect with your church. Employment and financial resources can help bring stability so begin to research these for yourself before deployment and for your loved one prior to separating from service. Visit wesupport.ca.gov and find out what resources are available.

A big thank you to the military families who contributed their thoughts and advice.